



Regional Planning Agency

Project Coordination Role

E-911 Dispatch Consolidation Feasibility Study

Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District



Project Coordination Role

RPA's play important project coordination role related to E-911 dispatching consolidation study.

- Initially brought all the communities together.
- Developed RECC grant applications and established contracts with State 911 Department.
- Developed RFP for project consultants and selected the best consultant available.



Project Coordination Role

- Managed the consultants throughout the project.
- Worked with the local police and fire chiefs to select the consultants and to establish advisory group.
- Followed up on data requests with local communities.
- Presented documents to the advisory group, chief elected officials, town administrators and the public.
- Responded to press requests and maintained draft documents on the web pages.



Consolidation Advantages and Disadvantages

- Advantages:
 - Multiple dispatchers available to handle a large event or disaster
 - Focus solely on dispatching duties
 - Address EMD requirements
 - Enhanced public safety
 - Cost-sharing among communities; and increased state incentive grants
 - Improved career advancement opportunities for dispatchers
- Disadvantages (perceived)
 - Loss of local control or autonomy
 - Dispatchers won't be addressing other tasks
 - Personnel not available in local police/fire departments.



Southeastern MA Experience

- SRPEDD received \$ 300,000 to undertake the RECC Feasibility Study at the request of the chiefs and administrative officers from 18 communities.
- SRPEDD worked with the local police and fire chiefs to select the consultant and to establish an Study Committee.
- Project was initiated in January 2010 and the consultants began to summarize the Existing Conditions.
 - Duration 1 ½ years



Dispatch Options Studied

- No changes
- Partial consolidation
- Total consolidation: Dartmouth, Dighton, Marion, Raynham, New Bedford, Fairhaven, Lakeville, Swansea, Mansfield, Easton, Freetown, Norton, Berkley, Wareham, Fall River, Taunton, Acushnet, Middleboro, UMass – Dartmouth



Public Process

- SRPEDD coordinated 6 public hearings; 3 to gather input; 3 to explain findings and recommendations.
- Created and hosted a web site with all project documents, case studies on previous regionalization efforts and benefits statements.
- SRPEDD made presentations on the study results to the local Public Safety Subcommittees and the Boards of Selectmen in each community.
- Created press releases and answered questions from the Press.



SRPEDD Feasibility Study Findings

- Phased approach
 - Regional Training
 - Regional CAD solution and Radio System
 - Region approach to coordinate MSAG and GIS databases
 - Implement a regional administrative agency and program manager to drive the above projects
- Consolidate into two RECC's
 - Public Safety can be enhanced with consolidation of individual dispatch operation
 - Regional savings of \$4.8M in annual operating expenses



Southeast Region Project Outcome

- Physical consolidation into two RECCs
 - Too bold of a move
 - Many political and emotional issues
- Proceed with phased approach
 - Regional training program
 - Regional CAD and radio solution
 - Regional MSAG, ALI, GIS database coordination
- New grant application to fund a regional administrative agency and project manager (not funded)



Project Management Roles

- Project kickoff
 - Dedicated person needed to drive the process
 - Local supporters usually don't have time, resources, or "staying power".
 - RPA's – COGs can provide assistance
 - Staff resources
 - Credibility with multiple communities and local officials
 - May be able to use State funds for this work
 - DLTA
 - New State 911 Dept. grant guidelines include project management *



Project Coordination Tasks

- Grant application, quarterly reports, disbursement requests,
- RFP and consultant selection
- Meetings
- Manage and coordinate consultants
- Follow up with towns to collect data
- Organize information on other projects and dispatch operations
- Create web page for public information
- Obtain support, meet with decision makers
- Public updates, press releases and inquiries
- Drive decisions



Lessons

- Project management role requires many hours
 - More than local agencies can provide
 - COG's – RPA's should budget accordingly
- Political and emotional issues will displace technical and financial benefits
 - Don't underestimate
- Local champion required
- Consider smaller projects, 2-5 communities versus 18
- Change is not easy